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The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity (The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions)

By PETER BROWN

University of Chicago Press February 1982, 1982. Paper Back. Book Condition: New. 'One cannot read early Christian history without running across Peter Brown again and again. A specialist in Western antiquity, Brown's distinction is being at once a scholar's scholar and a popular scholar. Here in six brief chapters he opens the social, political, and ecclesial cultures that birthed and nurtured Christianity's unique devotion to its "special dead." At his most brilliant he reveals the psychology and spirituality of late antique Mediterranean persons. Prior to this study the cult of the saints was largely attributed to the superstitious lower classes, or to baptized pagan practices. But Brown shows how, in addition to surprising cultural and economic factors, its true origins lie in "the working of an imaginative dialectic which led late-antique men to render their beliefs in the afterlife palpable and directly operative among the living by concentrating these on the privileged figure of the dead saint." The permanence of Brown's work-see also his seminal biography of Augustine (p. 43)- is his rare ability to combine wide, critical scholarship and a deep sympathy with lucid prose. His achievement renders the potentia of the saints both more historically accessible and more...



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